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INFO RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0348
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JOHANNESBURG FOR SCO
USDOC FOR RASHIDA PETERSEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/22/2017
TAGS: [EINV](#) [EAGR](#) [KTDB](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MA](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT RAVALOMANANA PROMISES MINISTRY OF
TRANSPORT AND TIKO WILL ENGAGE SEABOARD

REF: A. 06 ANTANANARIVO 1425

[1](#)B. 06 STATE 196979
[1](#)C. 06 ANTANANARIVO 1291

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reasons 1.4 B, D

[1](#)1. (C) An animated President Ravalomanana insisted he was "neutral and not interested" in Seaboard Corporation's operations at the Port of Tamatave; neither as President of Madagascar nor as owner/founder of the TIKO company (reftels). Holding up literature from the Dynatech Corporation, the President said, "This Company wants to invest a billion dollars in my country. That is something important that I must be involved in." When the Ambassador repeated demarche points we had passed to the GOM, the President replied firmly, "they (Seaboard) can talk to my Minister of Transportation and to TIKO directly. I have no role to play in this private commercial business." President Ravalomanana went on to say he did not like so much pressure over what he characterized as a minor commercial problem.

[1](#)2. (C) After the meeting, the Ambassador personally confirmed in a conversation with Minister of Transportation Randriamampihonona that the meeting with Seaboard would be scheduled: it is set for January 26. If the Minister is reshuffled after the January 19 inauguration, he assures us his successor will take up the case. In separate conversations, Ministry of Agriculture Secretary General Marius Ratolojanahary confirmed he would continue to follow the Seaboard case so it does not negatively impact U.S.-Malagasy relations, nor harm Madagascar's ability to attract foreign investment. Post also confirmed that a meeting with TIKO representatives, which Seaboard has sought for several months to pursue sales or partnership opportunities, will take place when Seaboard's representative returns to Madagascar.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT: In Washington and Antananarivo, Seaboard representatives continue to apply constant pressure on whatever officials will listen. That the GOM is under no legal obligation to extend the lease on the KOBAMA/Seaboard silos is never mentioned as a point of fact - though it is a fact. True to form, the GOM has repeatedly shot itself in the foot on this case, refusing to communicate with Seaboard and fueling an onslaught of accusations. Even with the promised meetings in the near future, Post is not convinced Seaboard will obtain anything like total satisfaction. When

the GOM recently offered to discuss lease extension, Seaboard was on the phone to the Embassy the same day demanding 15 years. The GOM, perhaps reasonably, offered a lease as long as Seaboard's partnership contract with KOBANA; three years.

14. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The Ambassador and Embassy officers have spent on average several hours per week on the Seaboard case in the last year - far more than for any of the other dozen U.S. commercial interests in Madagascar. We remain prepared to engage on Seaboard's behalf in case of any truly egregious violation of the "level playing field" standard. Otherwise limited staff and demanding priorities require Embassy resources be devoted to other Mission objectives. END COMMENT.

McGEE